

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /011 R

66665

DRAFTED BY: NEA: PAB: RAPECK

APPROVED BY: NEA: PAB: LBLAINGEN

NEA

S/ S- O: W. NEWLIN

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DACCA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 097597

EXDIS

FOLLOWING SENT ACTIONN SECSTATE WASHDC APRIL 25, 1973

FROM USUN NEW YORK IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 1553

EXDIS

DEPT PASS DEFENSE AND AID

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AORG, UN, SWFL, PINR, BG, UR

SUBJ: BANGLADESH- SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE

REF: USUN 1477

1. SUMMARY, CHITTAGONG AND CHALNA SHIP SALVAGE OPERATIONS ARE ENTERING INTO FINAL PHASE OF INITIAL TASKS THAT WERE ASSIGNED, WITH ADDITIONAL SALVAGE TASKS REMAINING IN BOTH PORTS, SITUATION WHICH LIES AHEAD MAY PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES AFFECTING US INTERESTS, INCLUDING, INTER ALIA, PRESENCE SOVIET NAVAL UNITS, CONTENTS THIS MESSAGE BASED ON OBSERVATIONS USUN MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ADVISERS
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WITH UNROB OFFICIALS NEW YORK. DISCUSSIONS HELD MAINLY WITH CONSULTANT RETAINED BY UNROD, WHICH WAS PREDECESSOR TO UNROB, FOR SURVEY CHALNA PORT SALVAGE. SOVIET AND CONSORITUM (SMIT- TAK, NETHERLANDS/ U, HAMES, FRG/ FUKADA,

JAPAN) SALVAGE FLEETS ARE BOTH PRESENTLY POSITIONED FOR ADDITIONAL WORK. IF EVOLVING SITUATION PRESENTS OPPORTUNITIES OR HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR US INTERESTS, TIMELY ACTION WILL BE REQUIRED. END SUMMARY.

2. DEPT WILL RECALL THAT, FOLLOWING END OF HOSTILITIES WITH PAKISTAN, BDG CONSIDERED CLEARANCE OF CHITTAGONG AND CHALNA PORTS ONE OF ITS PRIMORDIAL TASKS. MUJIB SOUGHT ASSISTANCE FROM UN OVER SEVERAL MONTHS. NOTWITHSTANDING CONFIRMATION OF THE NEED AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM THE UN IN DACCA, THERE WAS NEVER, APPARENTLY, A CLEAR RESPONSE FROM UNNY REFLECTING WHAT BD CONSTRUED TO BE AN URGENT MATTER. IN THE MEANTIME THE SOVIETS HAD OFFERED SALVAGE ASSISTANCE AND, AS WE UNDERSTAND IT, MUJIB ONLY RELECTANTLY SIGNED A PROTOCOL WITH USSR AFTER GIVING IN TO THE FRUSTRATIONS OF NO RESPONDS FROM UN AND CRITICAL PASSING OF TIME. THE SOVIETS REPORTEDLY HAD A SALVAGE FLEET AT SEA WITHIN 24 HOURS AFTER AGREEMENT, LOOKED AT CHALNA AND CHITTAGONG, DECIDED CHALNA PRESENTED TOO MANY PROBLEMS AND SETTLED INTO CHITTAGONG. THE WORK THE SOVIETS SET OUT FOR THEMSELVES AT CHITTAGONG IS SAID TO BE PROCEEDING REASONABLY WELL AND IN A COMPETENT MANNER, ALBEIT SLOWLY, AND SHOULD BE COMPLETED TOWARD THE END OF 1973. TH BD/ USSR PROTOCOL, THE PRECISE CONTENTS OF WHICH WE ARE UNAWARE, IS SAID TO EXPIRE DEC. 31, 1973. ALTHOUGH USUN HAS NO INDICATION SOVIETS ENGAGED IN OTHER THAN SALVAGE OPERATIONS, IT CLEAR THAT FORCE IS MORE THAN SUFFICIENT FOR WORK BEING UNDERTAKEN AND CONSTITUTES PRESENCE WHICH DID NOT HERETOFORE EXSIT.

3. WITH SOVIETS OPTING OUT OF CHALNA AND EXPANDING RELIEF OPERATIONS PUTTING INCREASED PRESSURE ON PORTS, RDG, NOTWITHSTANDING SOVIET PROTOCOL WHICH SUPPOSEDLY INCLUDED CHALNA, RENEWED SALVAGE REQUEST TO UN, SAYING IT HAD EXPECTED UNROD TO UNDERTAKE CLEARANCE OF CHALNA, ABOUT MID- AUGUST 1972 UNROD DID A SURVEY OF CHALNA, CONFIDENTIAL

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WHICH IDENTIFIED EIGHT PRIORITY VESSELS, AND SUBSEQUENTLY COTRACTED WITH CONSORTIUM CITED ABOVE TO CLEAR THE FIRST SIX OF THESE PRIORITIES. THIS WORK WILL BE COMPLETED O/ A MAY 15.

4. CONSORTIUM EQUIPMENT WORKING AT CHALNA WOULD, UNDER NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES, BE DEMOBILIZED FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF WORK. IT NOW APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT SWEDEN MAY FINANCE CLEARANCE OF TWO REMAINING VESSELS (SEE REFTEL). IF THIS TRANSPIRES UNROB WOULD RETAIN ABOUT ONE THIRD OF CONSORTIUM SALVAGE FLEET AND DEMOBILIZE THE REMAINDER (PROBABLY FUKADA EQUIPMENT, LEAVING SMIT- TAK AND ONE GERMAN CRANE IN BD). EQUIPMENT RETAINED WOUL BE REDUCED

HIRE BASIS OVER MONSOON PERIOD AND COMMERCE WORK ON TWO SHIPS AT CHALNA THEREAFTER THROUGH END OF 1973. AT SAME TIME, POSSIBILITY EXISTS FOR SOME OF THIS EQUIPMENT TO BE USED FOR LIFTING CHITTAGONG FUEL BUOY, NOW OUT OF COMMISSION, ONTO THE BEACH AND EFFECTING REPAIR LOCALLY (ALSO DISCUSSED REFTTEL).

5. IN MEANTIME, DURING RECENT TRIP TO BD AND DISCUSSIONS WITH CHITTAGONG PORT TRUST AS WELL AS SOVIETS IN CHITTAGONG, CHALNA CONTRACT MANAGER HAS COME TO REALIZE THERE ARE 40 ODDLINE ITEM SALVAGE JOBS IN CHITTAGONG OVER AND ABOVE 14 JOBS BEING DONE BY SOVIETS THESE DERELICTS ARE NOT OF FIRST PRIORITY, BUT ARE SAID TO BE SUCH THAT THEY SHOULD BE CLEARED NOW OR LATER. POINT IS THAT THEY REPRESENT POTENTIAL ADDITIONAL SALVAGE WORK IN BD AND COULD PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION FOR (I) SOVIETS TO SEEK AN EXTENSION TO PROTOCOL WHICH REPORTEDLY EXPIRES DEC. 31, 1973; (II) BDG HAVE WESTERN CONSORTIUM, OR PART THEREOF, TAKE ON ADDITIONAL WORK AND, THUS, DISPLACE SOVIET PRESENCE WHICH IT ALLEGEDLY DID NOT WANT IN FIRST PLACE; AND (III) TO EXTENT CONSORTIUM AND SOVIETS LEAVE A VACUUM, PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OTHERS TO MOVE INTO AREA, AN OFF- THE- CUFF ESTIMATE WE HAVE HEARD IS THAT ADDITIONAL WORK CHITTAGONG WOULD TAKE ABOUT TWO YEARS AND COST IN THE ORDER OF DOLS 5-6 MILLION.

6. FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF USUN, SEVERAL IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ARISE;

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(A) ARE THE REMAINING DERELICTS IN CHITTAGONG OF SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO PROVIDE ECONOMIC OR OTHER JUSTIFICATION FOR PROCEEDING WITH THEIR CLEARANCE NOW?

(B) TO WHAT EXTENT IS POSSIBLE CONTINUED SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE, EVEN IN ITS PRESENT FORM, OF CONCERN TO USG?

(C) IF ADDITIONAL SALVAGE WORK IN CHITTAGONG WERE TO BE UNDERTAKEN, TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE PROBABLE PRESENCE OF THE WESTERN- OWNED CONSORTIUM IN BD THROUGH END OF 1973 OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIETS?

(D) IF CONSORTIUM DOES OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE, TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD USG BE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING THIS OPTION OR URGING OTHERS TO DO SO?

(E) IF NEITHER SOVIETS OR CONSORTIUM UNDERTOOK ADDITIONAL WORK, TO WHAT EXTENT WOULD THIS LEAVE A VACUUM WHICH MIGHT BE FILLED BY OTHERS, AND HOW WOULD THIS AFFECT UM. S. INTERESTS? JAPAN, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS BEEN SUGGESTED AS ONE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED.

7. USUN IS NOT IN A GOOD POSITION TO JUDGE THE STRATEGIC,
ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL POSSIBILITIES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR
US INTERESTS. THEREFORE, THE PURPOSE OF THIS MESSAGE IS
TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SITUATION AHEAD AND TO PROVIDE
BACKGROUND ON WHICH JUDGEMENTS MAY BE BASED. SCALI
UNQUOTE RUSH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SWFL
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAY 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE097597
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: NEA: PAB: RAPECK
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730560/abqcemop.tel
Line Count: 170
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: USUN 1477
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 DEC 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Dec-2001 by shawdg>; APPROVED <26 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> mcm 980226
Subject: BANGLADESH- SOVIET NAVAL PRESENCE
TAGS: PINR, BG, UN, UR, AORG
To: DACCA
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005